



CITY OF EVANSTON
ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY
INVESTIGATION

Public Workshop #3

July 16, 2025

WELCOME!



Today's Meeting

6:00 - 6:05 p.m.	Process Overview
6:05 - 6:40 p.m.	Equity Investigation Findings
6:40 - 6:45 p.m.	Introduction to Tonight's Activities
6:45 - 6:50 p.m.	Next Steps
6:50 - 8:00 p.m.	Break for Station Activities

WELCOME!



Who are we?



**Brian
Hurd**



**MaryAnn
Taylor Crate**



**Brett
Weidl**



**Sarah
Lilly**



**Yolanda
Bouchee**



**Marcus
Griswold**



Capacity Building
Redevelopment
Strategies



Public Engagement +
Transportation
Planning

MKSK

Urban Planning +
Landscape Architecture



Environmental
Justice

EEI OVERVIEW



Environmental Equity

All people have the same opportunities for health and prosperity without unfair disadvantages from physical, economic, or social structures.



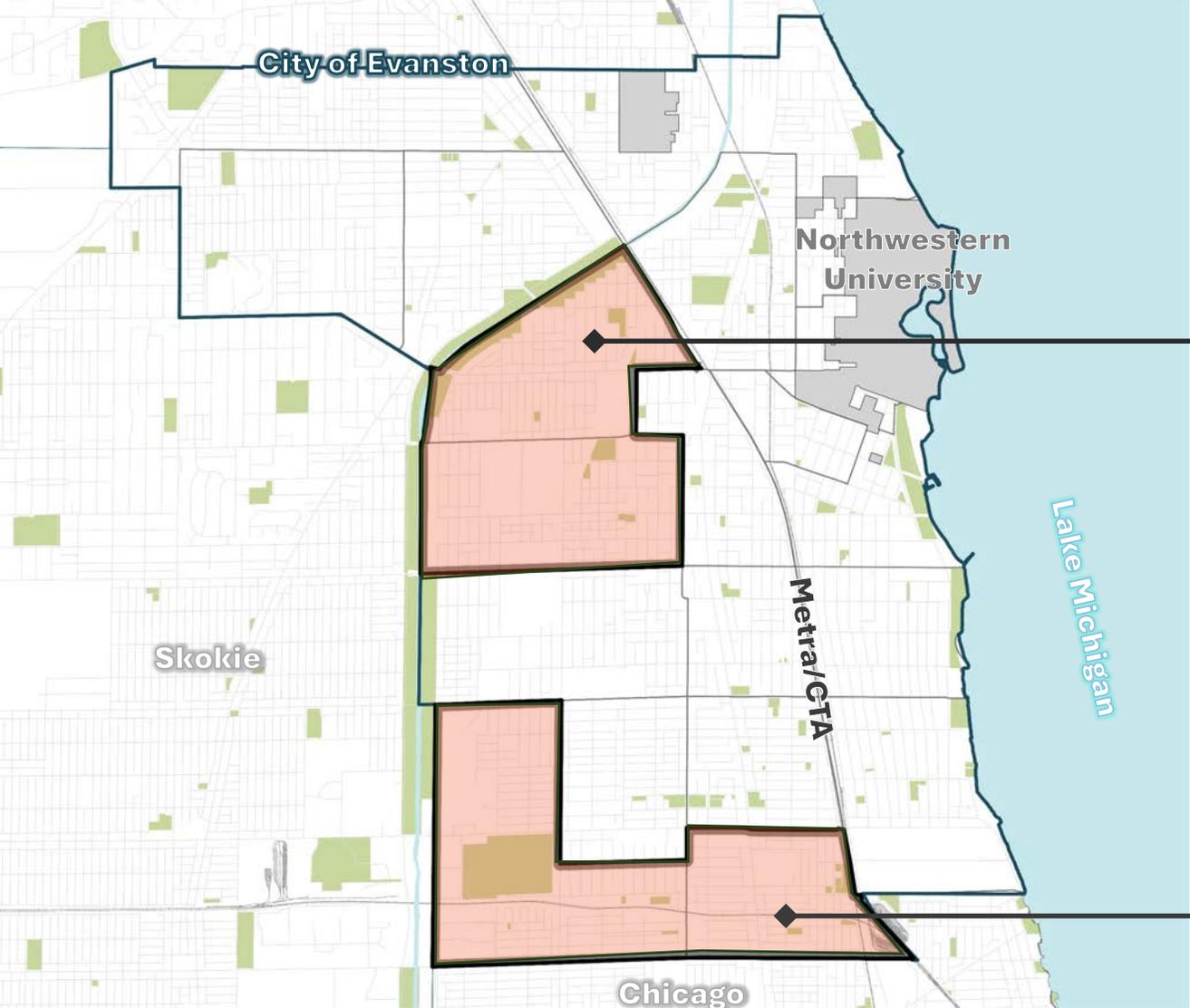
EEI OVERVIEW



EEI OVERVIEW



EEI OVERVIEW



Based on this data, we see systemic disadvantages in these Focus Areas:

Focus Area

Focus Area

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

65+
Public Workshop
Attendees



120+
Pop-up Event
Participants

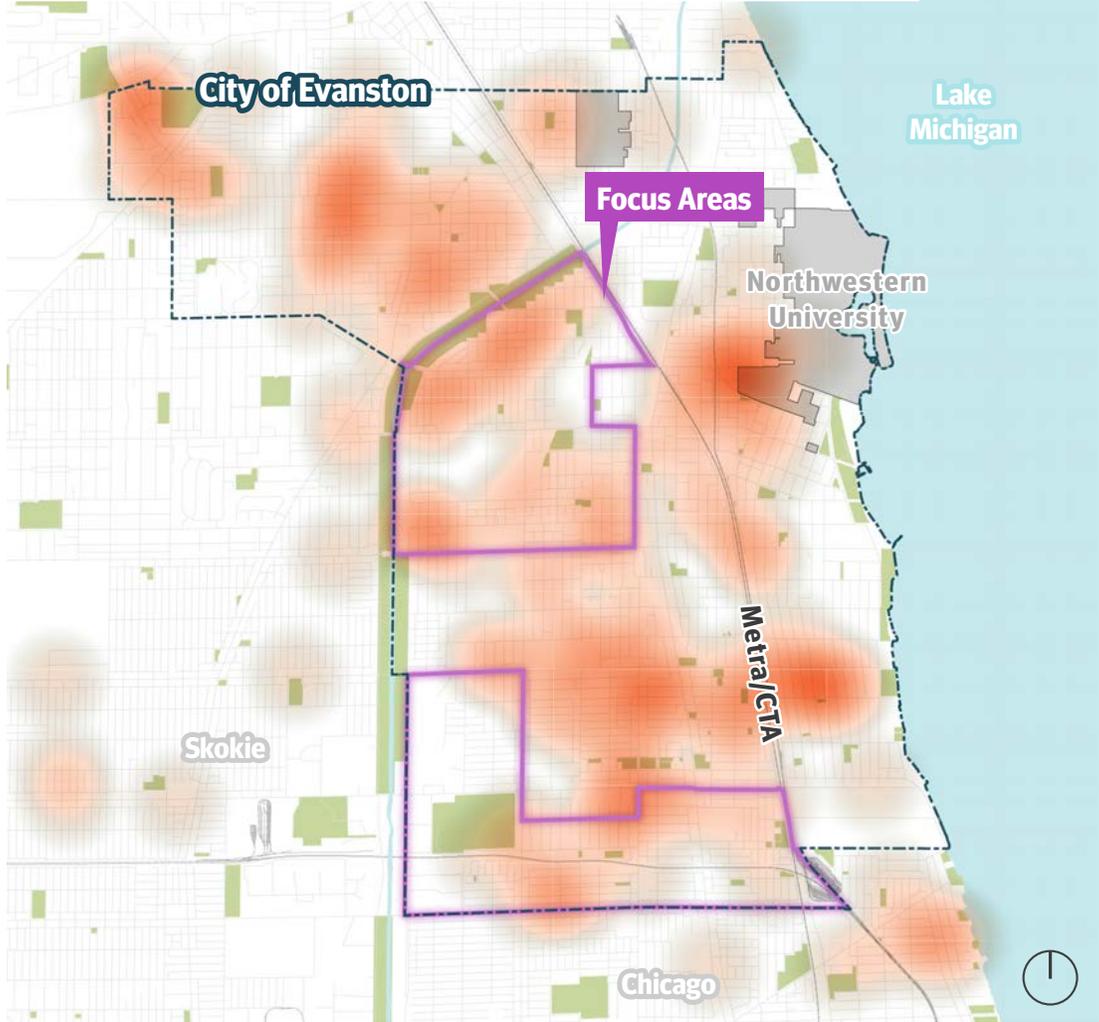


3
Pop-up
Community
Events Attended

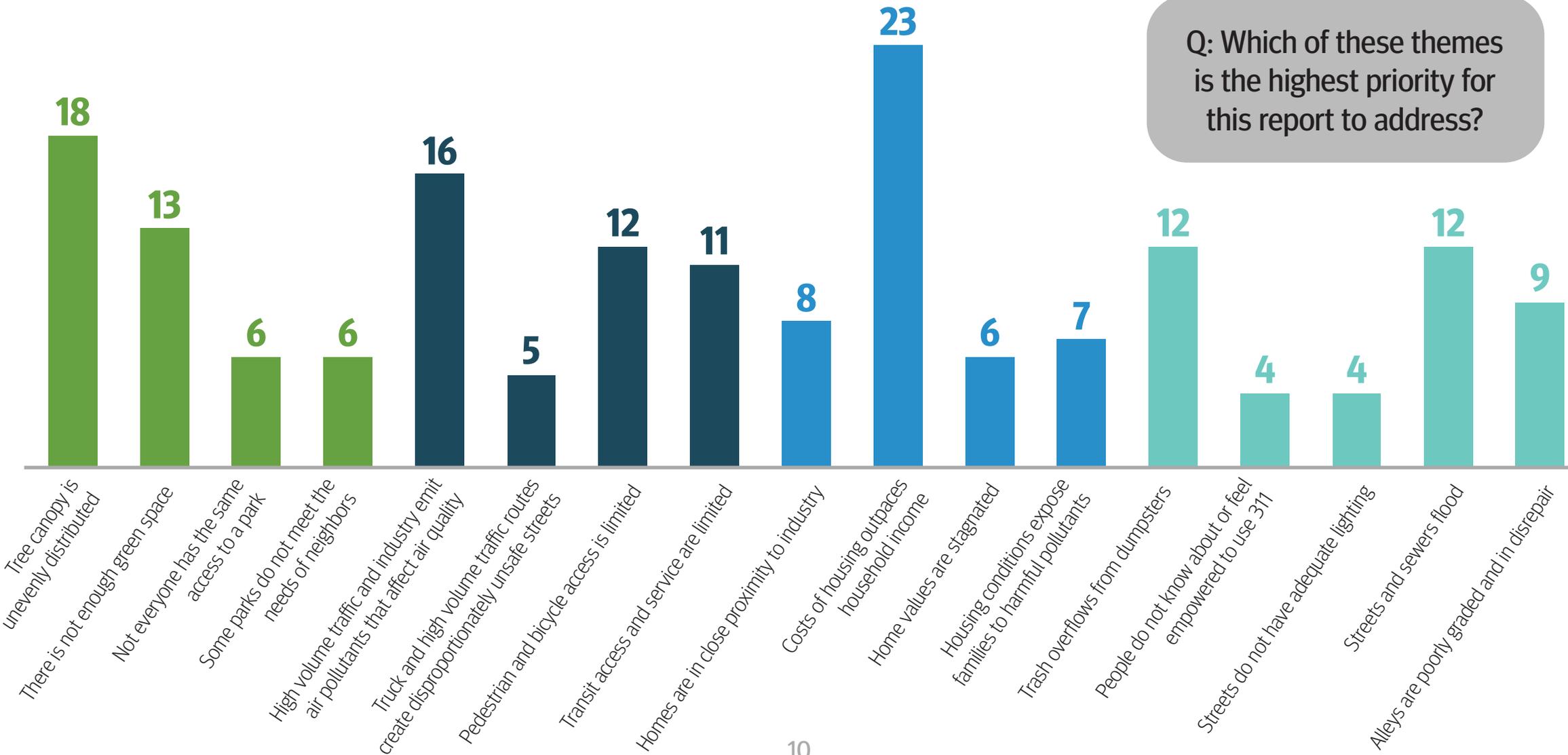


30
Focus Group
Participants

HEATMAP OF PARTICIPANTS HOME ADDRESS

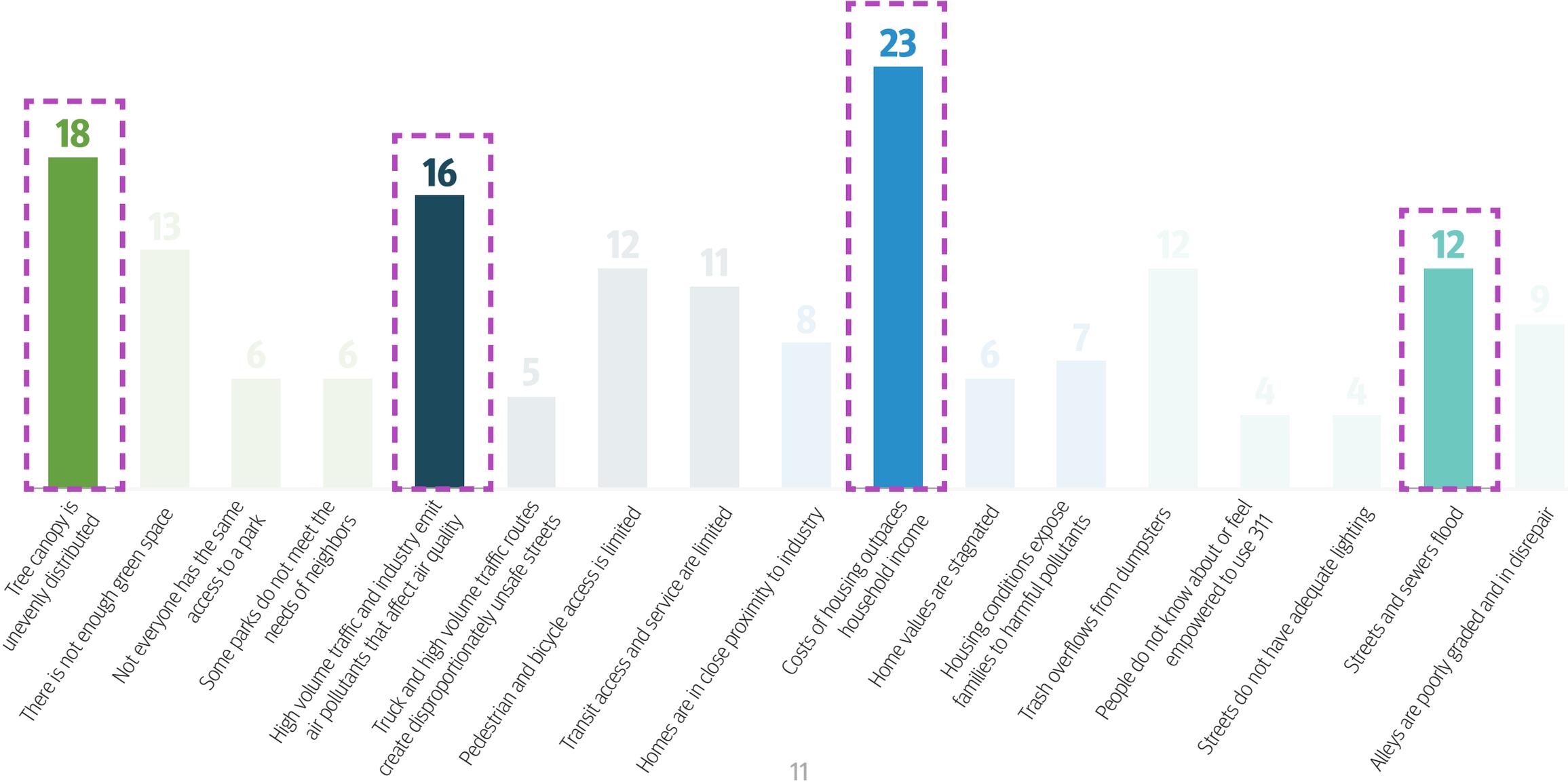


ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

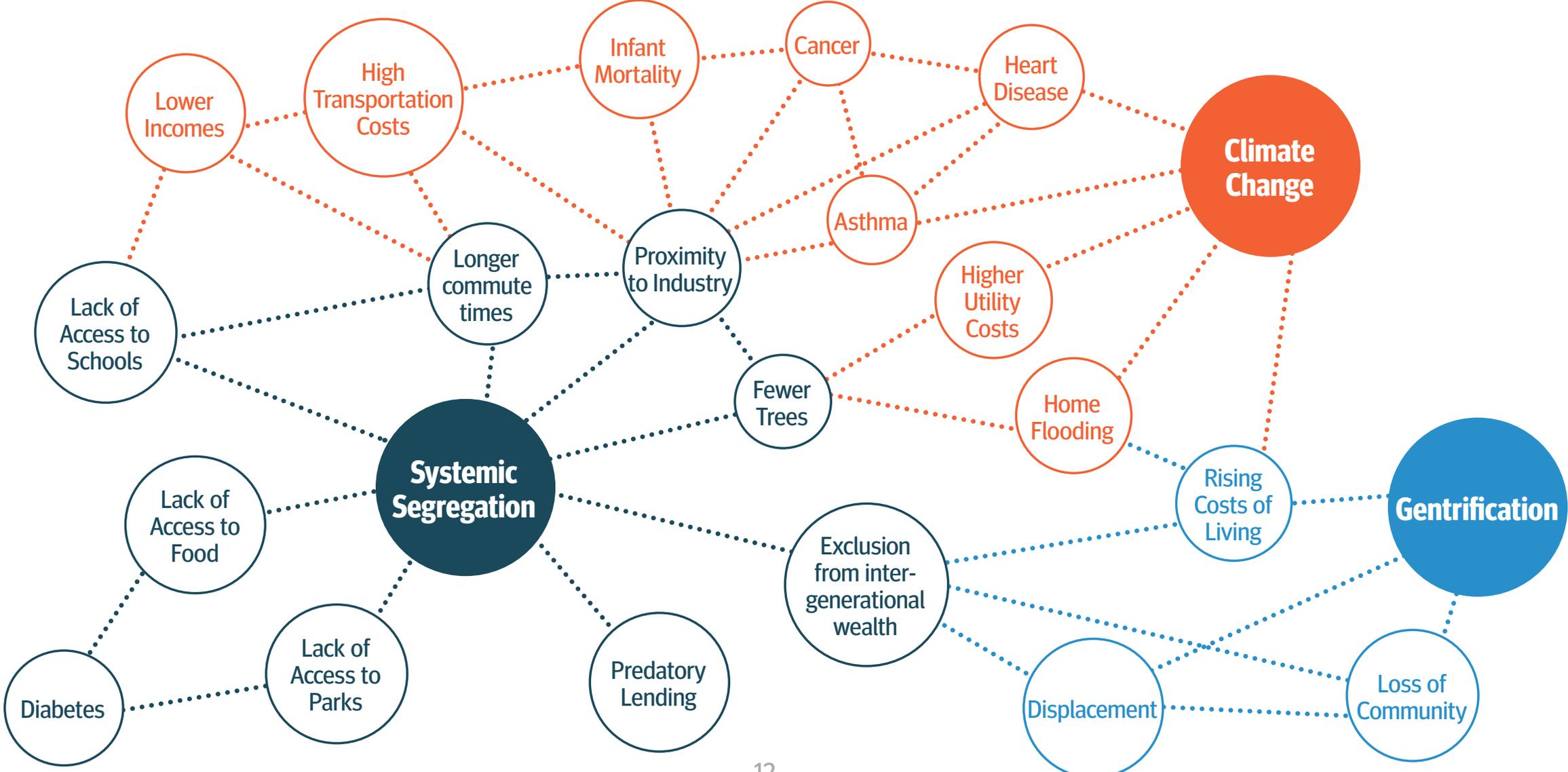


Q: Which of these themes is the highest priority for this report to address?

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



INVESTIGATION FRAMEWORK



INVESTIGATION FRAMEWORK



INVESTIGATION FRAMEWORK



Theme #1

Theme #2

Theme #3

Theme #4

INVESTIGATION

Lived Experience

Historical Context

Inventory of Current Policies

Equity Evaluation

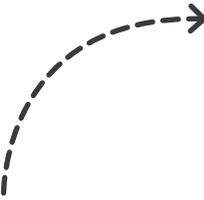


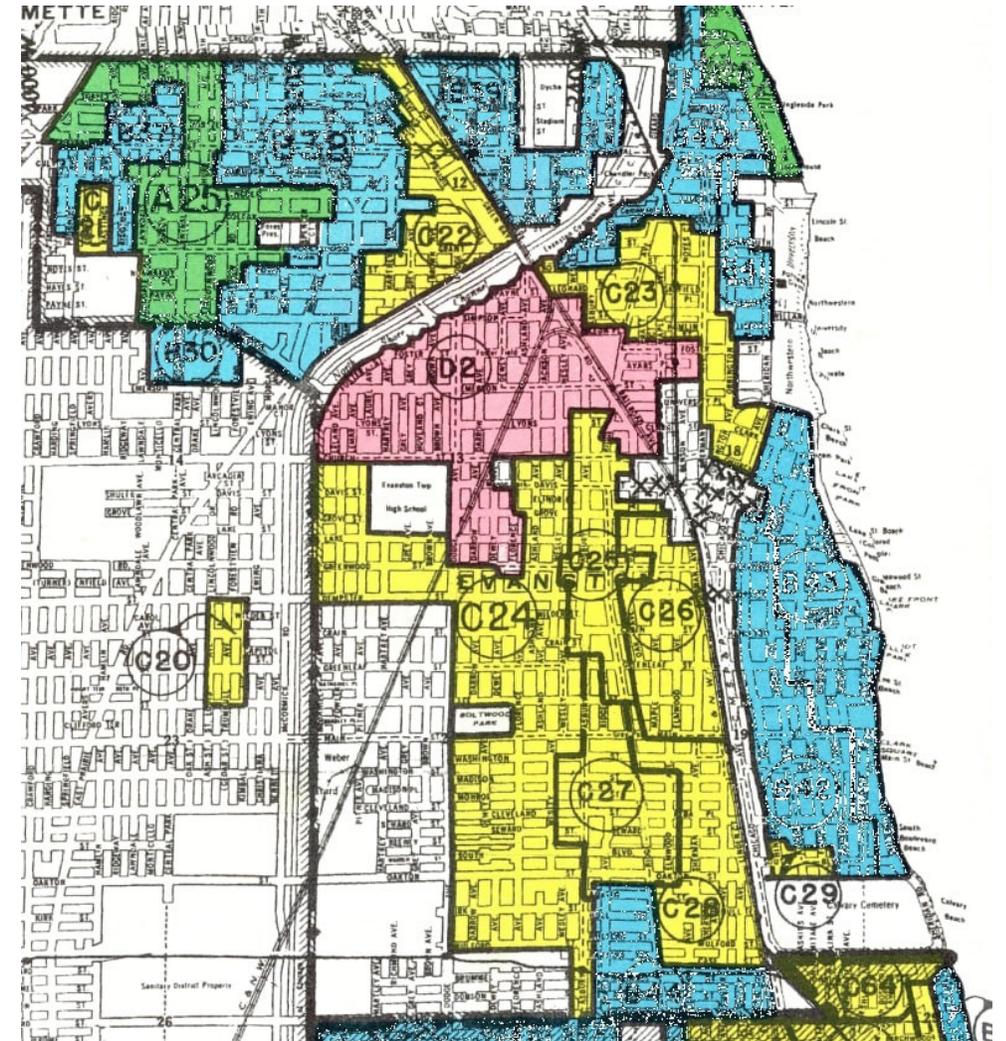
INVESTIGATION FRAMEWORK

Redlining

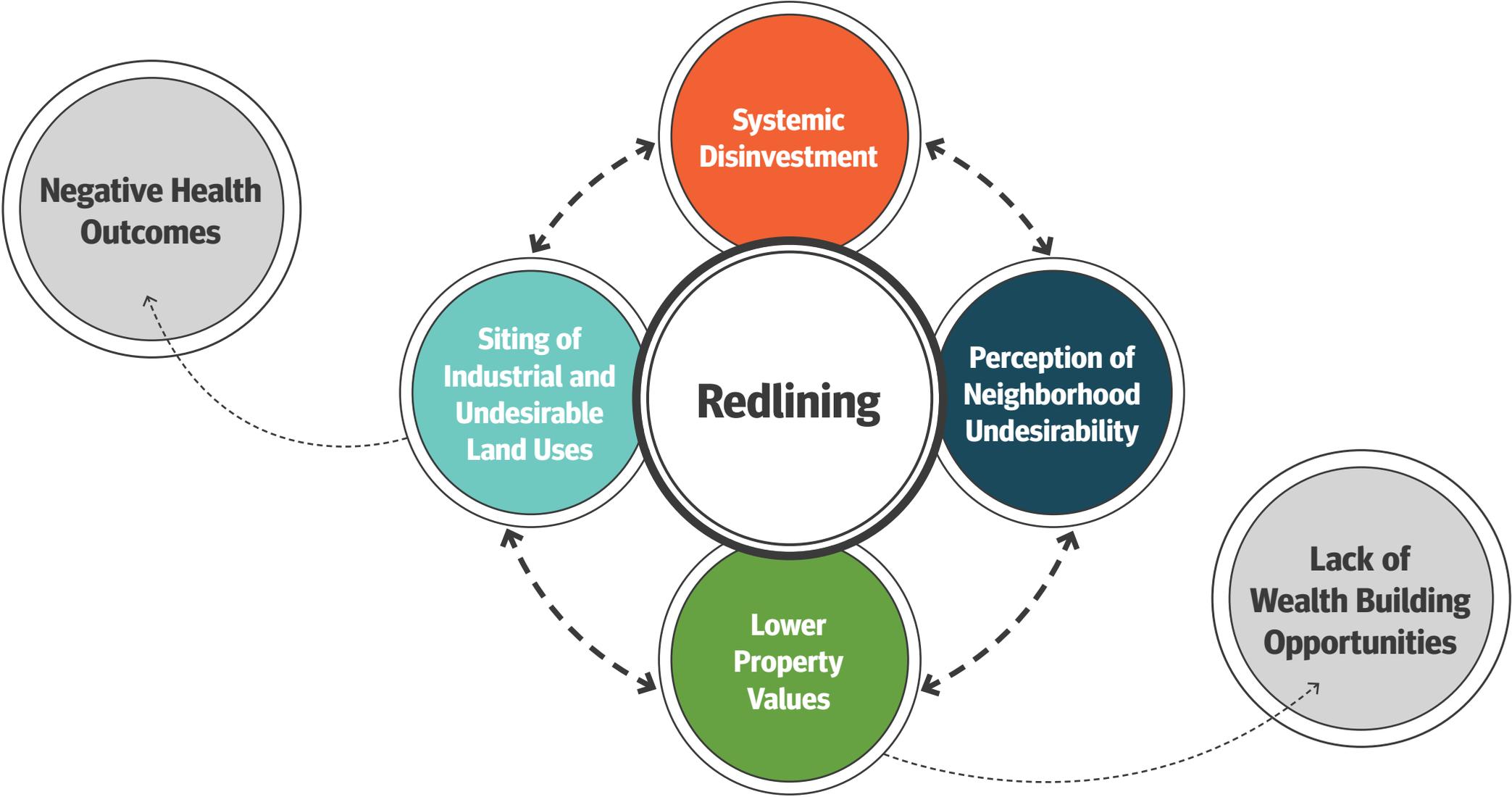
- Federal practice that began in the 1930s of surveying cities based on mortgage risk, assigning grades to residential neighborhoods that reflected their mortgage security.
- The color-coding of the maps was as follows:

Best	Still Desirable	Definitely Declining	Hazardous
------	-----------------	----------------------	-----------
- When determining the grade to assign, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) factored in housing quality, recent sale and rent values, and crucially, the race, ethnicity, and class of the residents who lived there.
- Banks and mortgage lenders would reference this information when determining who should receive loans and which areas of cities were “safe” investments.

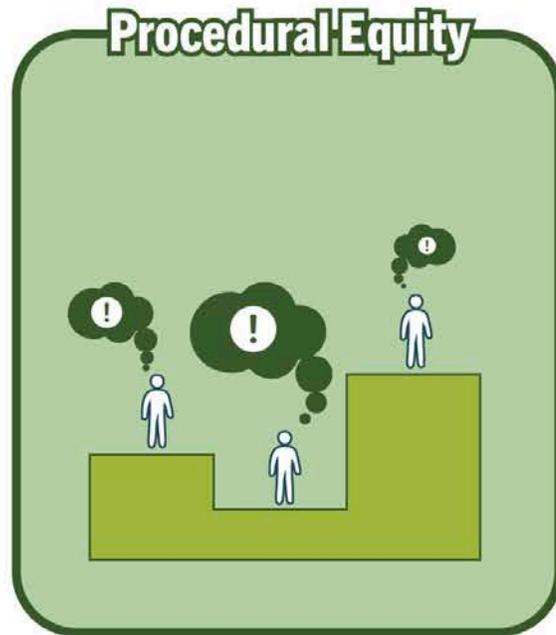

**Redlining Map
of Evanston**



INVESTIGATION FRAMEWORK

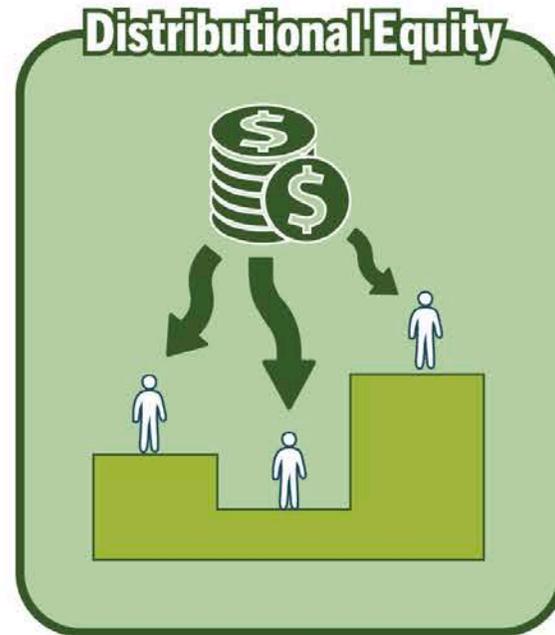


DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY



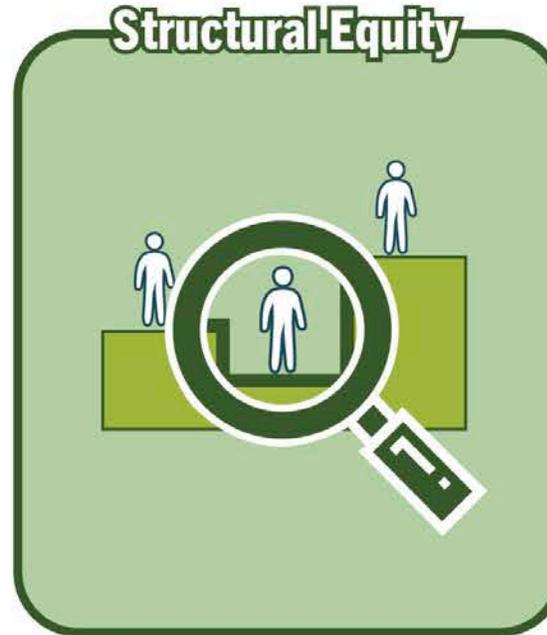
**Inclusive Engagement
& Representation**

Example: Providing child care or children's activities at public meetings



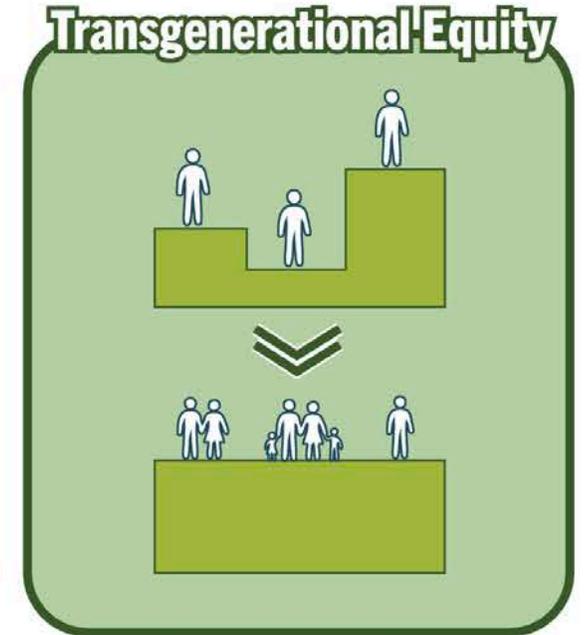
**Fair Distribution of
Benefits & Burdens**

Example: Creating target areas for increased investment in previously overlooked areas



**Recognition of Power
Structures & Systems
of Privilege**

Example: Evaluating how decisions are made and by whom



**Sensitivity to Impacts
on Future Generations**

Example: Reducing barriers for homeownership, in order to help families build generational wealth

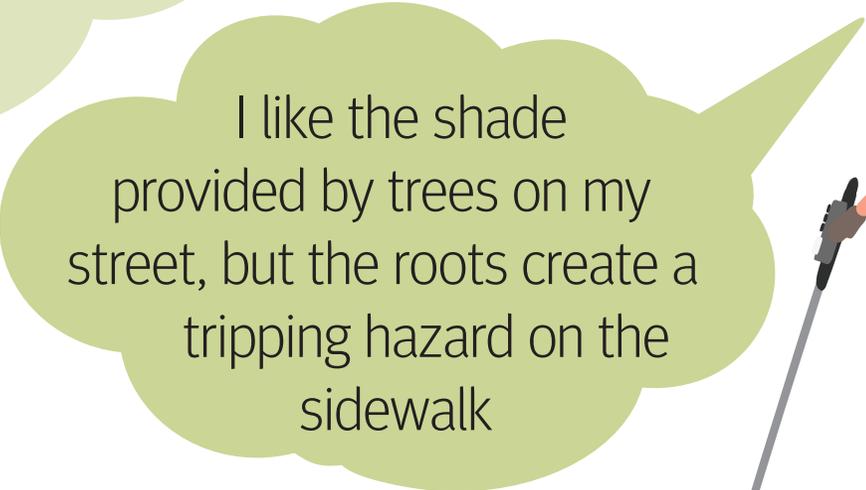
PRIORITY THEME #1

**Tree canopy is
unevenly distributed.**

LIVED EXPERIENCE



I appreciate the trees of Evanston, but I don't have the capacity, resources, or know-how to properly maintain the trees in my yard.



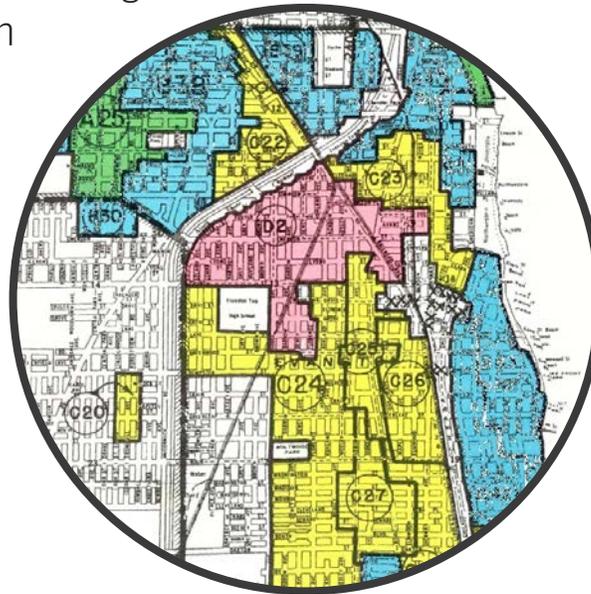
I like the shade provided by trees on my street, but the roots create a tripping hazard on the sidewalk

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1930s

Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC)

Redlining designated Evanston's west and southwest side as "hazardous", depriving those areas of mortgage access and city investment, entrenching a pattern of underinvestment in those neighborhoods that is still felt today. Research from the U.S. Forest Service indicates that former redlined neighborhoods in U.S. cities have significantly lower canopy coverage (21%) today than non-redlined neighborhoods (40%).



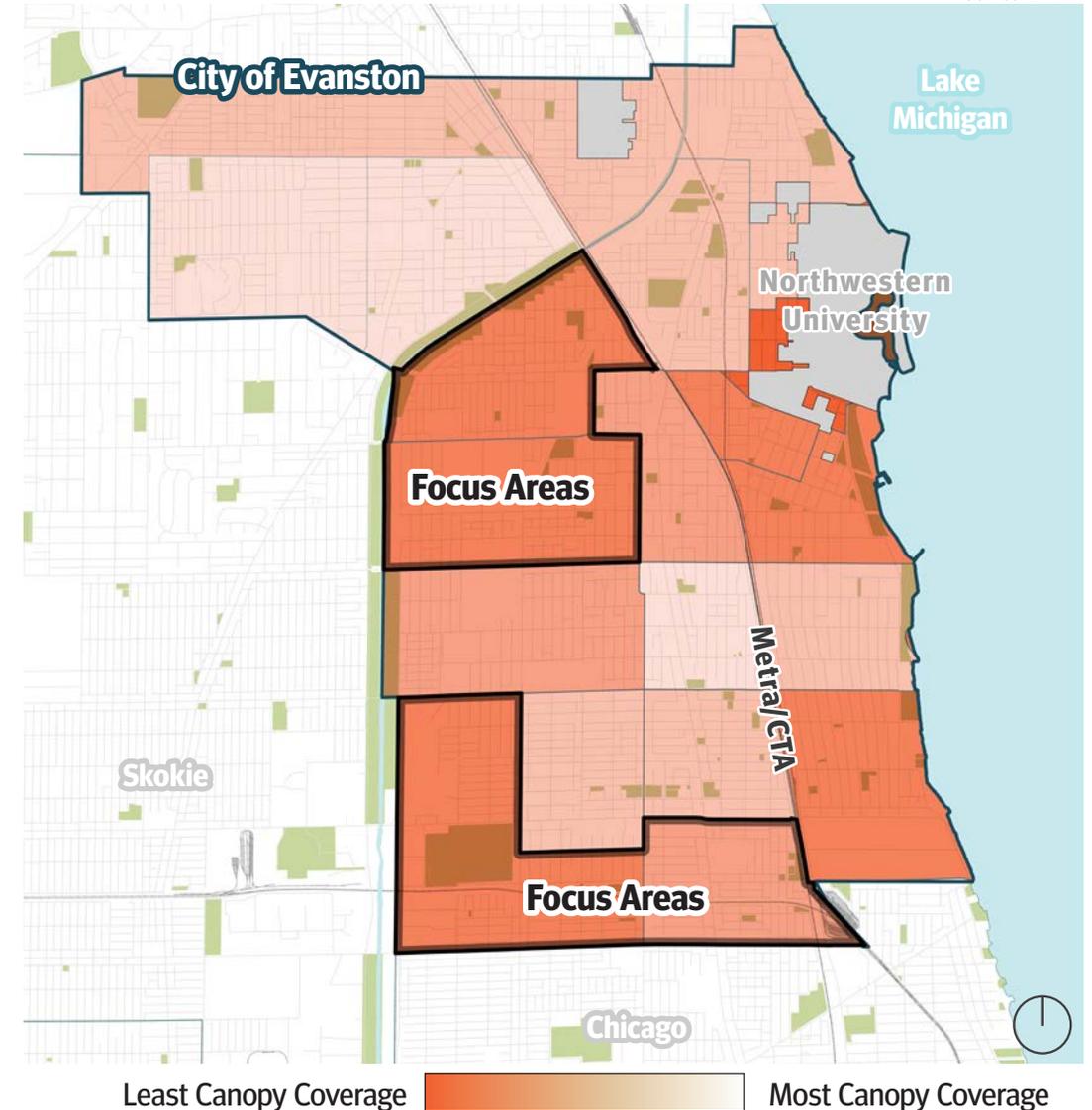
1940

Due to redlining, the area that is now the 5th Ward was overcrowded, with **housing occupancy in 1940 at 150%** due to multiple Black families living in homes in this area because they were systemically and legally excluded from buying homes in the other areas of Evanston. This likely contributed to less green space on lots in the 5th Ward, which means less room for tree planting.

INVESTIGATING INEQUITY

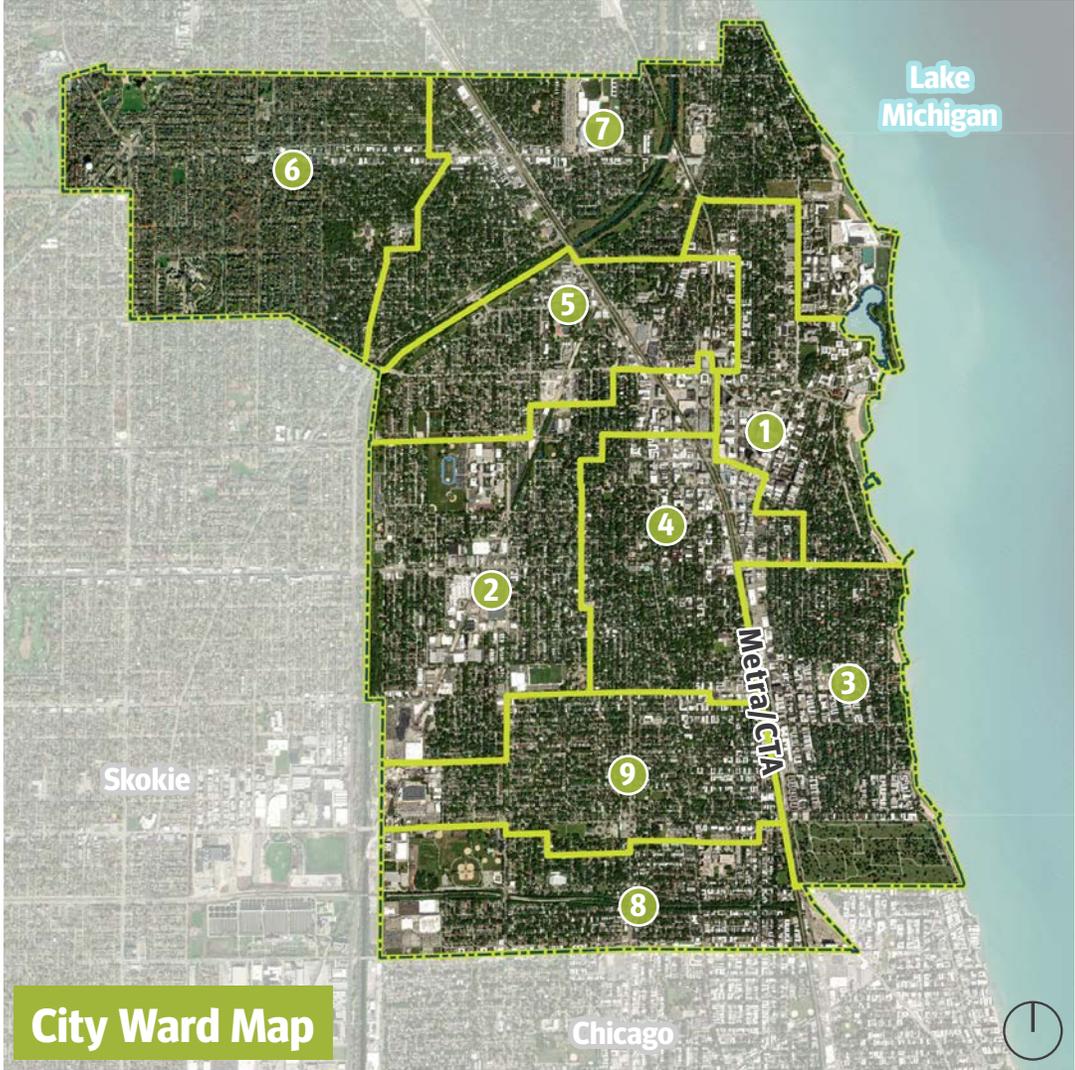
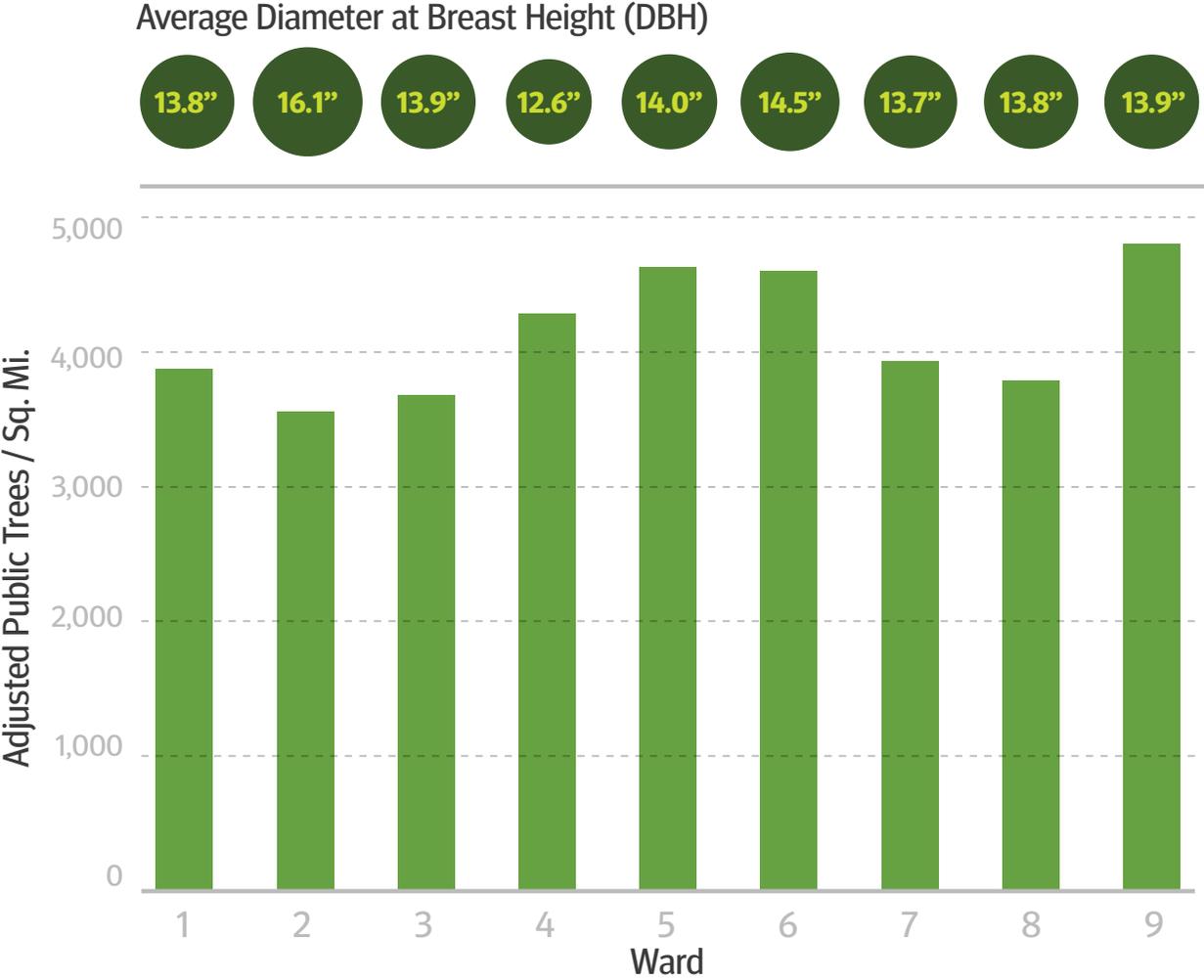
- Map on the right shows average percentage canopy cover per census tract, helpful to understand larger geographic disparities
- To understand this issue in more depth, we need to investigate **public vs. private trees**

Source: EPLAN



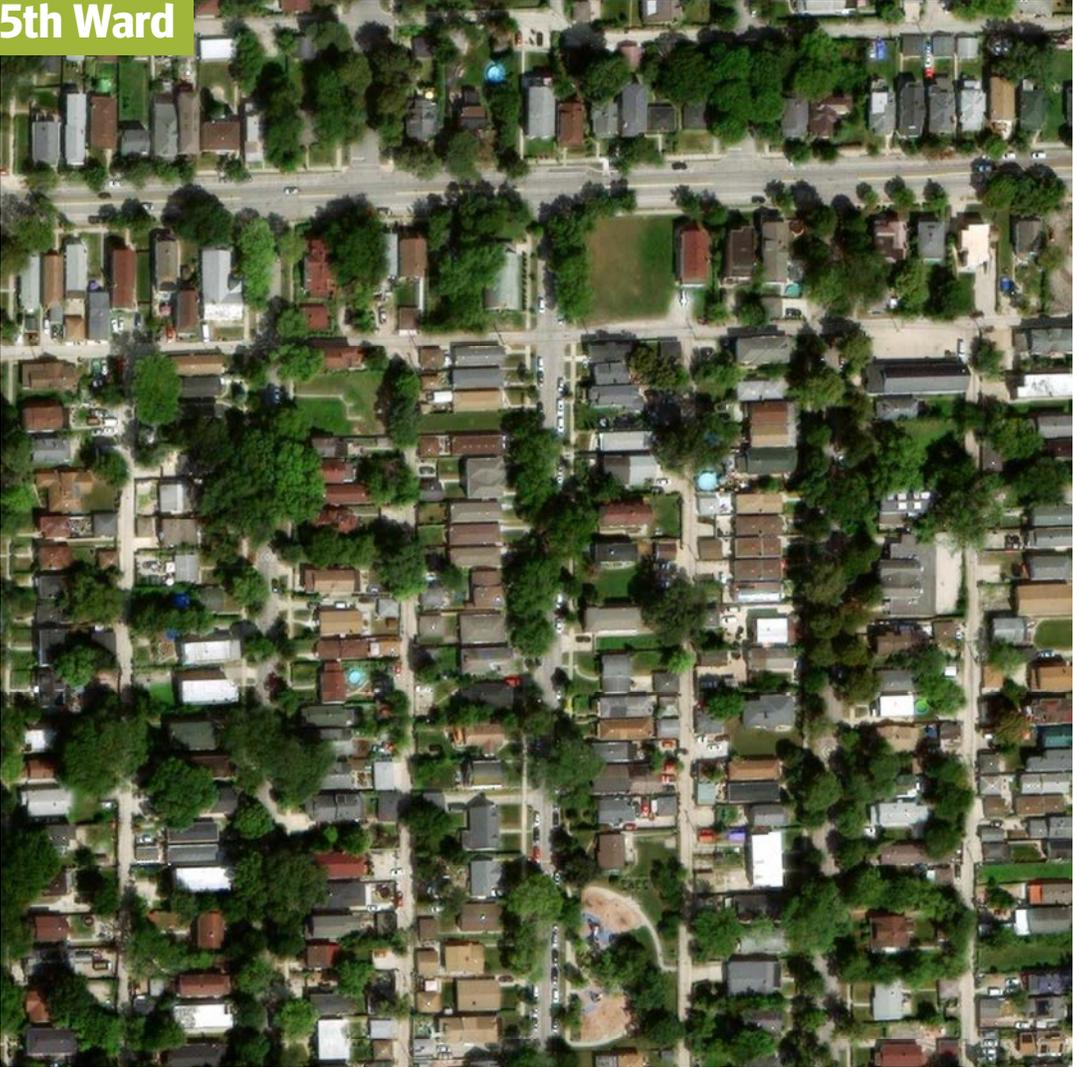
INVESTIGATING INEQUITY

PUBLIC TREE DISTRIBUTION AND HEALTH BY WARD



INVESTIGATING INEQUITY

5th Ward



3rd Ward



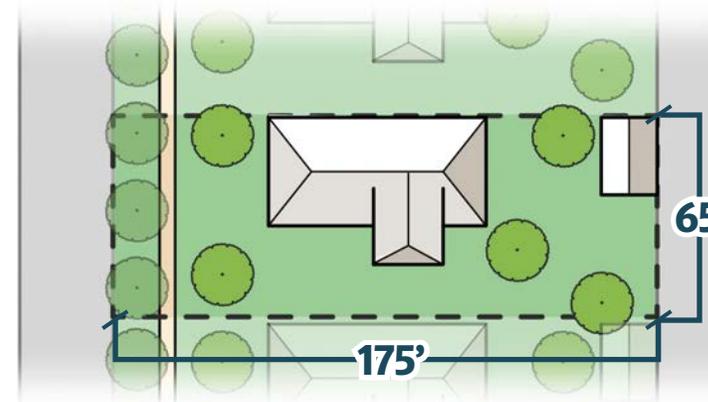
Aerial images are at the same scale

INVESTIGATING INEQUITY

- Trees located on private property make up about 70% of Evanston's urban forest
- Today, the **5th Ward has the lowest average lot size** among all wards, which means less space for private property owners to plant trees

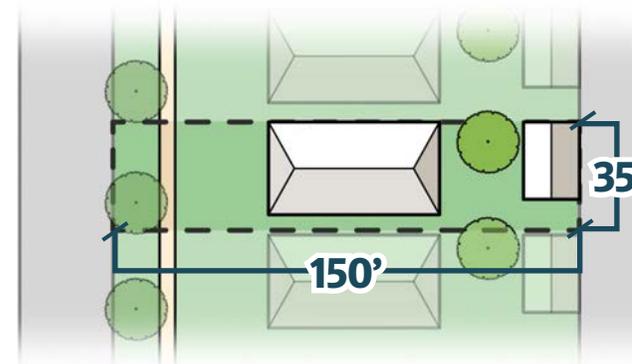
Typical Lot Sizes

3rd Ward



Roughly 73% of this lot is open space

5th Ward



Roughly 57% of this lot is open space



Open Space, Parks, and Trees

Resources/Information

- Public education/awareness of health impacts of extreme heat
- Tree Care Public Outreach
- Natural Habitats Evanston

Ordinance/Policy

- Tree Canopy Preservation Policy

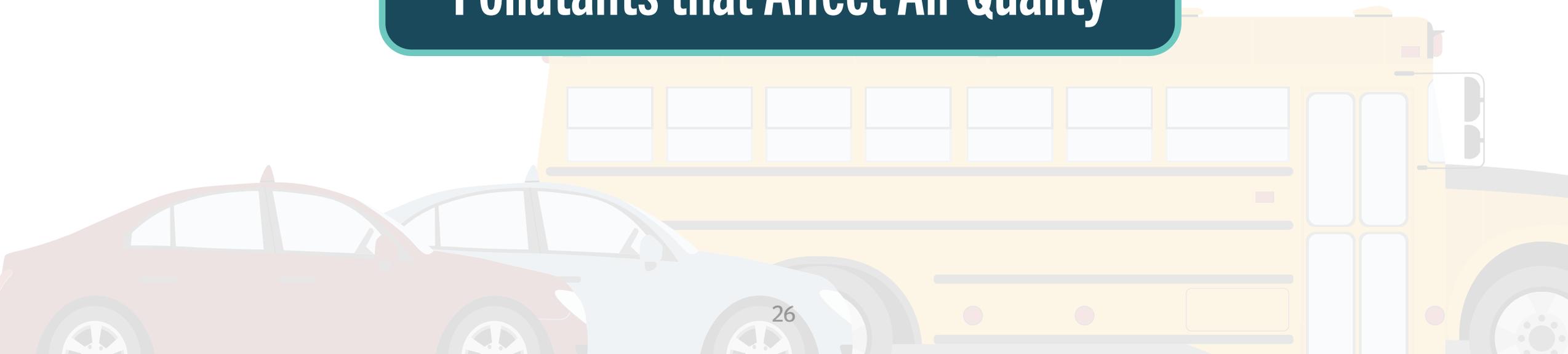
Programs

- Parkway Tree Planting
- Private Dutch Elm Disease Insurance

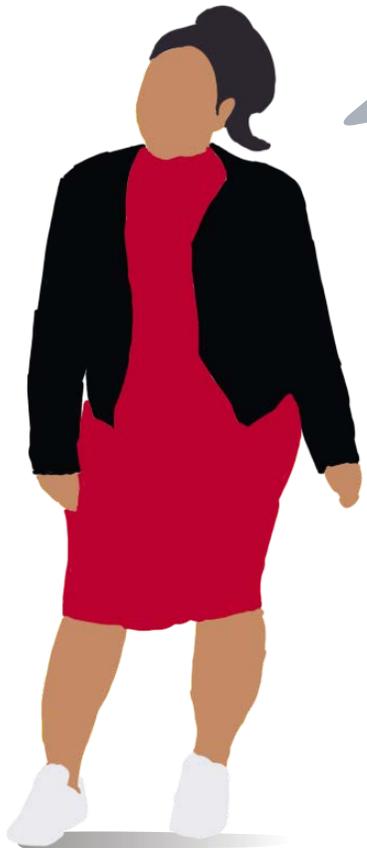
PRIORITY THEME #2



**High Volume Traffic and Industry Emit
Pollutants that Affect Air Quality**



LIVED EXPERIENCE



Noise and vibrations from truck and car traffic disrupt my quality of life when I'm in my home

I don't walk to high school just a couple blocks away because I'm scared of the traffic and overwhelmed by toxic smells



HISTORICAL CONTEXT



1930s

Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) Redlining began a pattern of structural disinvestment in areas like Evanston's 5th Ward. Then, due to their perception as "undesirable" neighborhoods and lower land values, they became zones for industrial land uses, which generate larger volumes of truck traffic, noise, and pollution. As a result, the "undesirability" and disinvestment of these areas persists and grows stronger. This is the vicious cycle of environmental racism and injustice.

1980s

The Church Street Waste Transfer Station begins operating at its current site during a time of less stringent environmental regulations. **The area's lower property values** made it a politically easier location to for siting.

2010s

Due to resident concerns, the City of Evanston negotiated a **Host Community Agreement** for improvements to the Waste Transfer Station and settled a lawsuit filed against the city by the facility operator at the time, Advanced Disposal.

2019

The City of Evanston conducted a **6-month air quality study for the area** surrounding the Church Street Waste Transfer Station

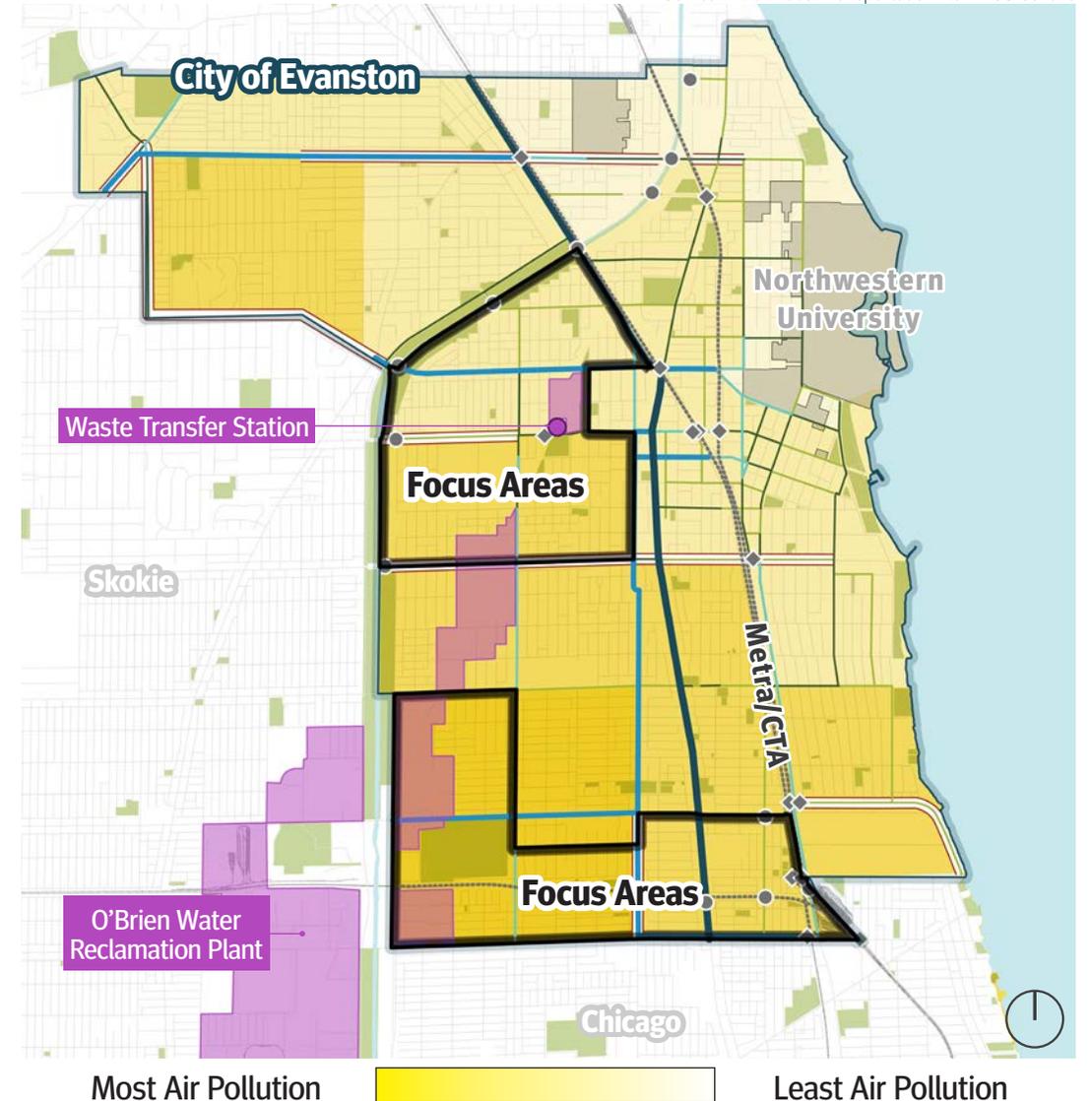
INVESTIGATING INEQUITY

- An Evanston resident's **life expectancy can vary up to 13 years** depending on the neighborhood they live in. Air and noise pollution are two environmental factors that contribute to chronic disease.
- Life expectancy in the 5th Ward (75.5 years) is significantly lower than Evanston's average (82 years).
- According to firsthand data collected by Environmental Justice Evanston, more than **40 diesel trucks** enter the Church Street Waste Transfer Station.

Source: Multi-Modal Transportation Plan + US Census

Roadway Volumes

-  Highest
-  Medium
-  Lowest
-  Rail
-  Overpass
-  State Route
-  Underpass
-  Industrial & Big Box Commercial





Streets and Transportation

Ordinances/Policy

- Pavement Degradation Policy

Public Improvements/Projects

- Church Street Bike Infrastructure
- Sidewalk Improvement Program
- Church/Dodge Transportation Improvements
- Chicago Avenue Multimodal Corridor Improvements
- Green Bay Road Corridor

- MFT Street Resurfacing
- Beck Park Trail Improvements/Extension

Programs

- Pedestrian Crossing Requests
- Divvy Bike Share Program / Divvy For Everyone (D4E)
- RTA Reduced & Ride Free Fare Programs (Pace, Metra & CTA)

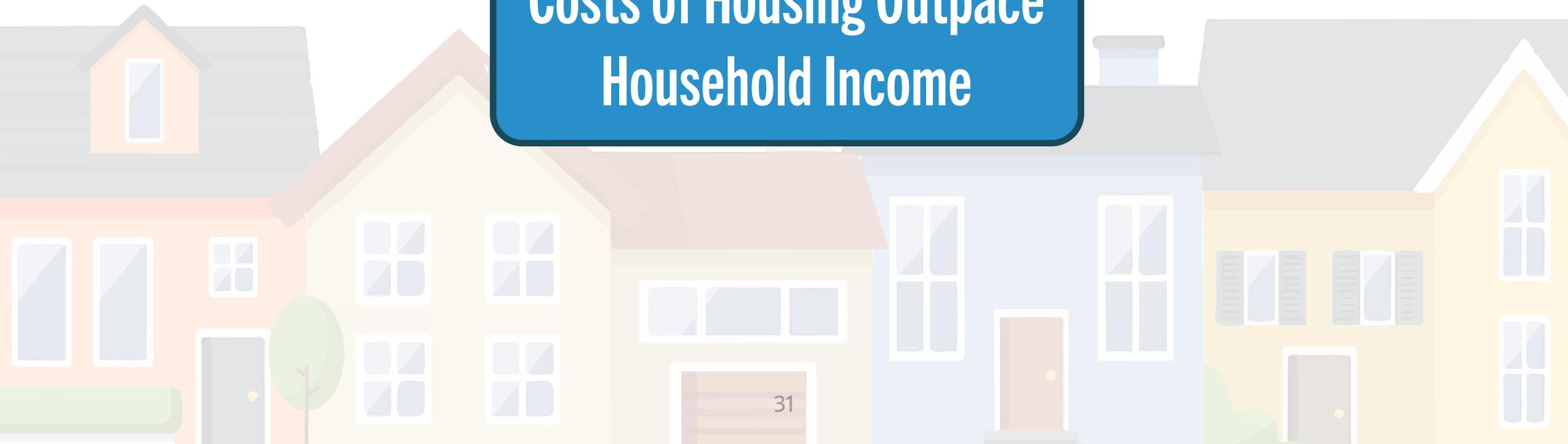
Financial Assistance/Discounts

- Subsidized Transportation
- Wheel Tax Discount

PRIORITY THEME #3



Costs of Housing Outpace Household Income



LIVED EXPERIENCE



I am concerned about gentrification and my neighbors being priced out of their homes they've lived in for decades

I want to be able to buy a home in Evanston, but it's out of reach for me...there are no affordable homes



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1930s

Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) Redlining made it nearly impossible for Black families to obtain mortgages or home loans, locking them out of wealth-building opportunities through property ownership. In addition, systemic disinvestment by the city and developers led to poor housing conditions and exacerbated long-term cost burdens for Black residents.

1960s

Evanston City Council passes several local fair housing ordinances, prohibiting housing discrimination on the basis of race.

Late 20th Century

As Evanston's increasing population drives up demand for housing, gentrification starts to occur in certain neighborhoods of Evanston, contributing to escalating property values and taxes, higher rents, and a lack of affordable housing stock. This pattern continues today.



2021

Evanston becomes the first city in the U.S. to begin distributing reparations to Black residents for past housing discrimination

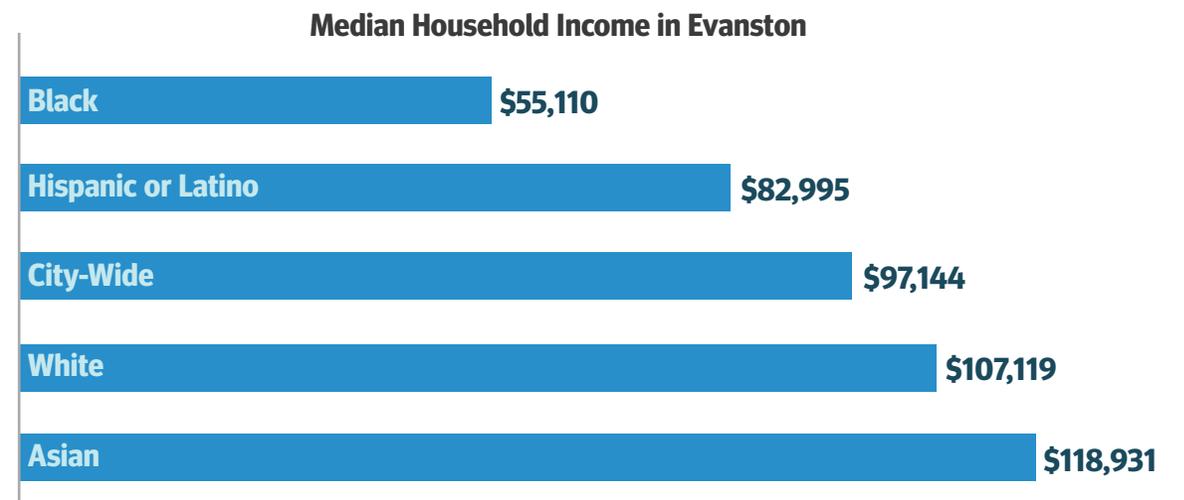
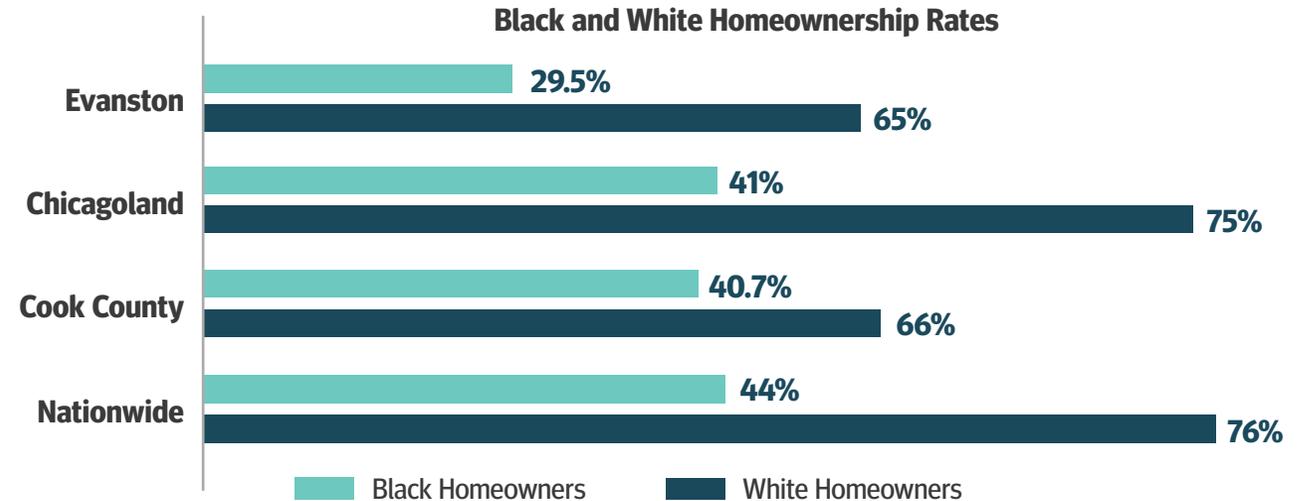
INVESTIGATING INEQUITY



Black Wealth Disparity and Housing Choice

- A median income Black household would not be able to afford a median-priced home anywhere in Evanston.
- 70% of Black Evanston households rent their homes
- Evanston’s Black residents make up over 17% of the total population, but only 8.7% of homeowners
- White Evanston residents make up 61% of the total population, but nearly 80% of the city’s homeowners

Source: <https://evanstonnow.com/most-of-evanston-unaffordable-to-median-income-house-hunters/>



INVESTIGATING INEQUITY



Housing Affordability

- More than one-third of Evanston households are cost burdened, spending more than 30% of their household income on housing costs (47% of renter households and 24% of owner-occupied households)
- From 2012 - 2022, Evanston's median gross rent including utilities, increased about 41% to \$1,625 per month
- 43% of owner-occupied households spend at least \$3,000 per month on housing costs
- According to the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), Evanston has lost more than 2,700 affordable housing units since 2000

AFFORDABLE

Housing means residents having access to housing that costs less than 1/3 of gross income



≤ 30%

of income is spent on housing costs, including utilities and property taxes

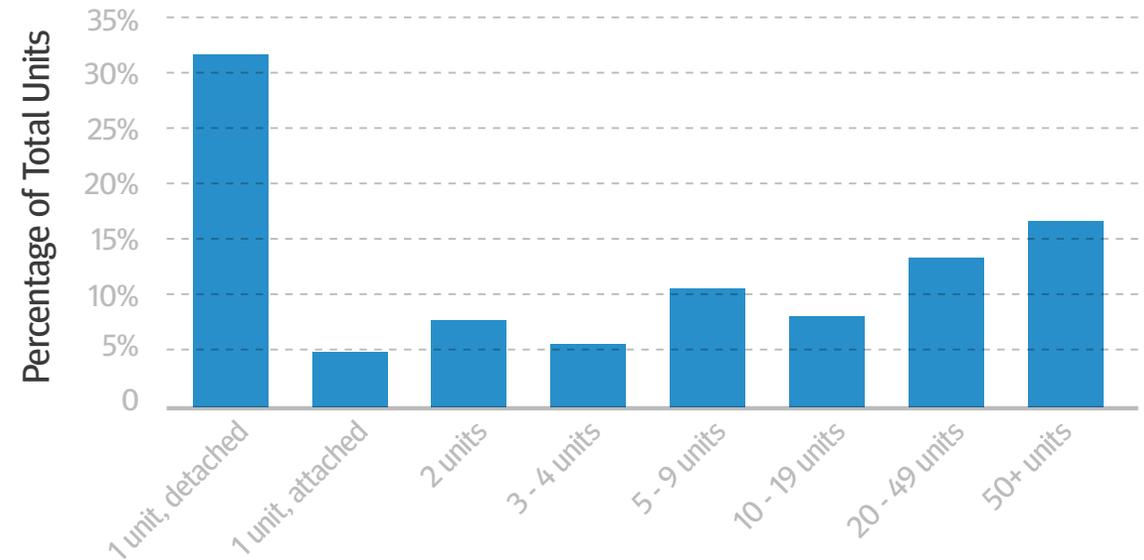
INVESTIGATING INEQUITY

Housing and Household Size Mismatch

- The reduction in household sizes have expanded the need for smaller, less costly housing.
- 65% of owner-occupied units have >3 bedrooms, while 80% of renter-occupied units have ≤2 bedrooms, which means larger households may struggle to find adequate rental space, while smaller households may be priced out of buying the few smaller, more affordable homes
- Few of the more affordable types of housing that used to be common in Evanston, such as modest bungalows, duplexes/triplexes, row houses, have not been developed in the last several decades, due in part to the increase in house size, and to zoning that often allows only single family homes on relatively large lots, resulting in higher cost per unit.

HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE

Source: ACS (2019 - 2023 Estimate)





Housing and Development

Ordinance/Policy

- Equity and Empowerment Commission Gentrification Initiative
- Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance
- Fair Housing Ordinance
- Inclusionary Housing Ordinance
- Healthy Buildings Ordinance

Programs

- Evanston Green Homes Pilot

Financial Assistance/Discounts

- Emergency Solutions Grant Rental Assistance Program

PRIORITY THEME #4



Streets and Sewers Flood

LIVED EXPERIENCE



When the streets flood, I have difficulty crossing where I need to and where there are ramps for me. It means I can't get where I need to go

Flooding in our basement caused mold buildup, which triggered asthma attacks in my son



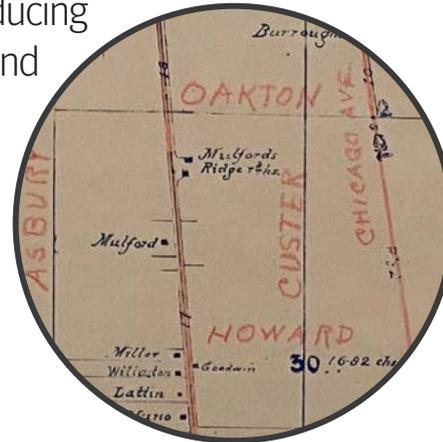
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Pre-1830

Prior to settlement, **Evanston was predominantly forest, swampland, and marshes.**

1840s

A drainage ditch, referred to as “Mulford Ditch,” was constructed to drain the areas that is now Ridge and Chicago Avenues into Lake Michigan, reducing the swampland in that area.



1910

North Shore Channel was completed, carrying stormwater and sewage together downstream and away from the lake

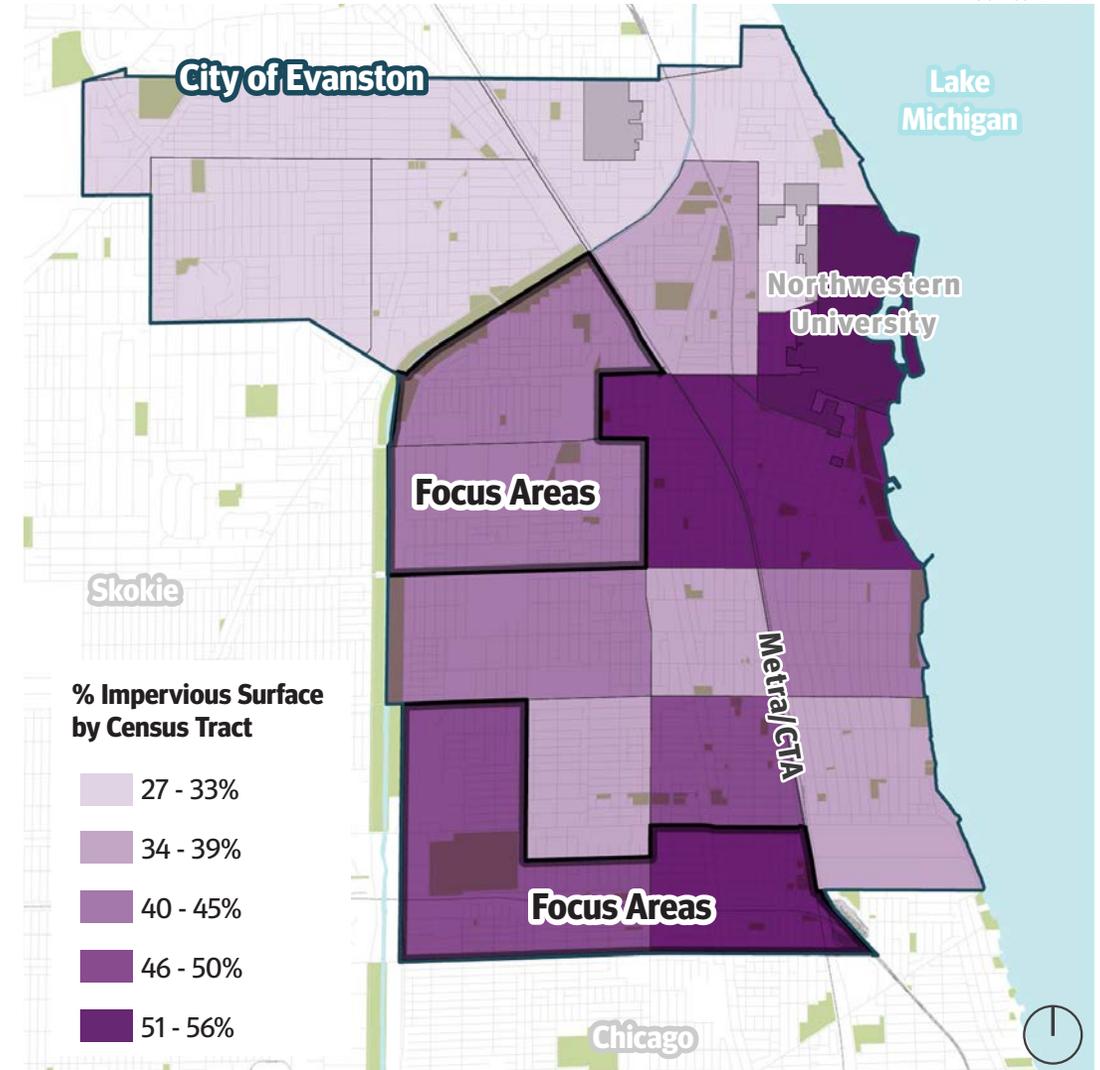
1910

The City implemented the Long Range Sewer Improvement Program, constructing nine miles of relief sewers and 43 miles of sewer mains

INVESTIGATING INEQUITY

- Evanston's land is made up of a thin layer of topsoil, followed by minimally porous clay, which causes slow groundwater filtration
- Streets and alleys cover about 13.5% of the surface area of Evanston
- Increasing flood frequency and intensity due to global climate change means this is an ever-pressing issue
- Flood impacts from more intense and frequent storms can exacerbate existing inequities, including health disparities and housing security

Source: EPLAN



INVENTORY OF CURRENT EFFORTS



Community Services

Resources/Information

- Evanston 311
- EvanstonAlerts Notification System
- Emergency Management Plan

Public Improvements/Projects

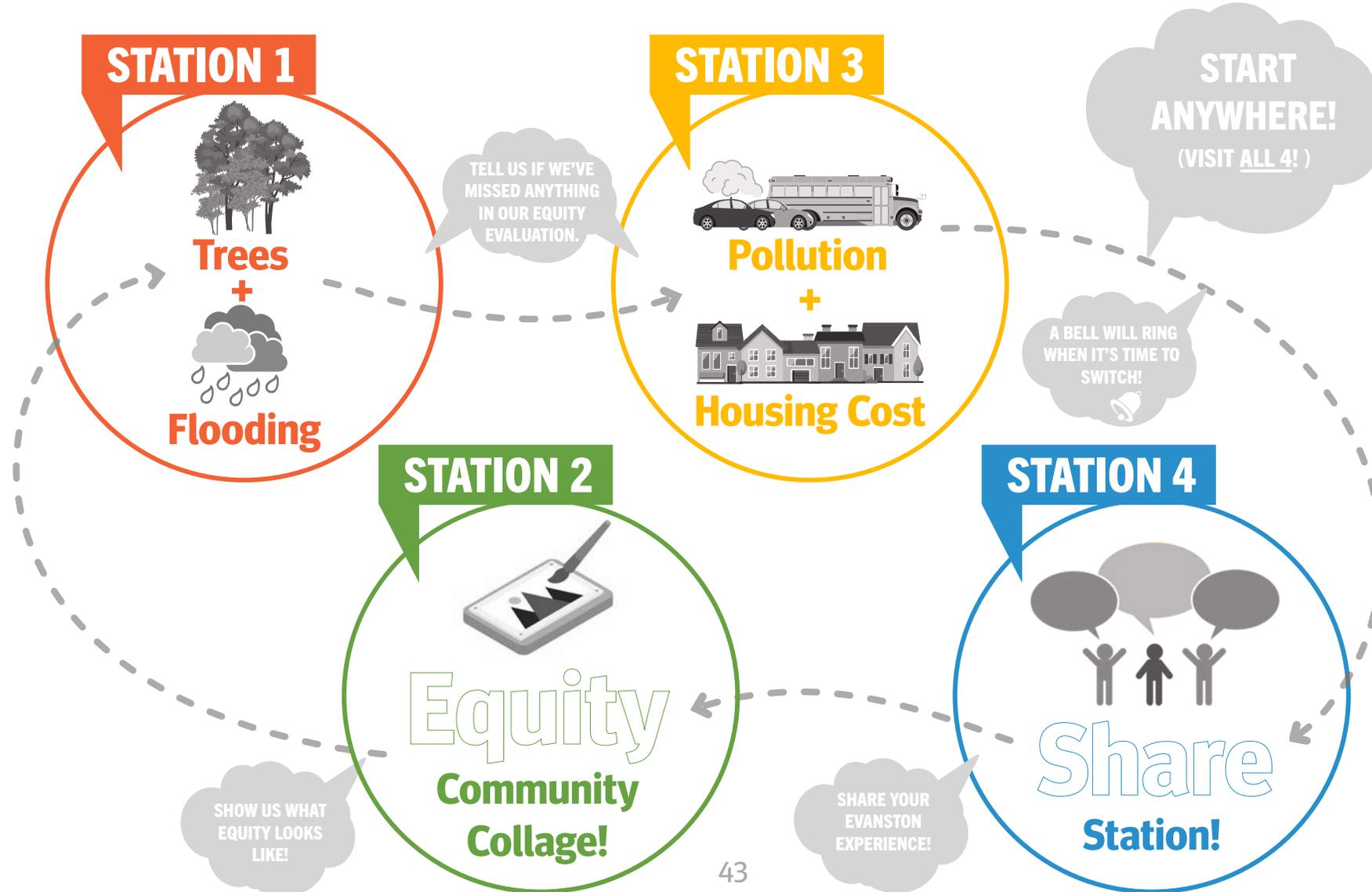
- Unimproved Alley Maintenance/Paving
- Long-Range Sewer Improvement Program

- CIPP Sewer Rehabilitation
- Water Main Improvements

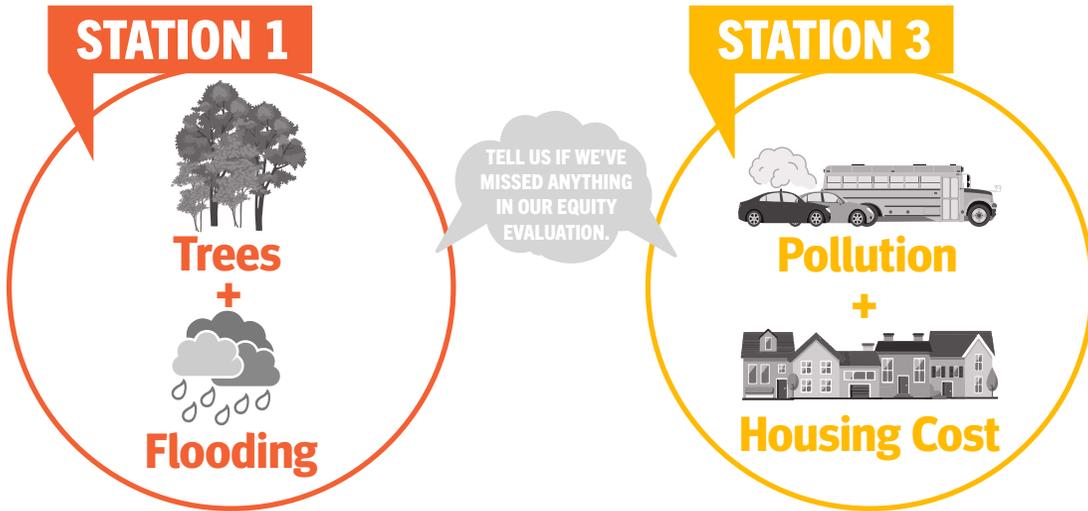
Financial Assistance/Discounts

- Affordable Water/Sewer Rate

TONIGHT'S ACTIVITY



TONIGHT'S ACTIVITY



PRIORITY THEME #1
Tree Canopy

PRIORITY THEME #2
High Volume Traffic and Industry Emit Pollutants that Affect Air Quality

Evaluating this theme through the four lenses of equity:

Procedural Equity	Distributional Equity	Structural Equity	Intergenerational Equity
Inclusive Engagement & Representation Who is included in forming policies or creating programs? Does the community have enough information to get involved and give meaningful feedback?	Fair Distribution of Benefits & Burdens Who is included in forming policies or creating programs? Does the community have enough information to get involved and give meaningful feedback?	Recognition of Power Structures & Systems of Privilege How does this address existing inequities? Who is represented in decision-making processes and positions of power?	Sensitivity to Impacts on Future Generations How do these efforts impact the community in the long term? How are generational or structural barriers being lifted?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolution Environment Board that meets monthly fosters transparency, accountability, and community involvement. Natural Habitat Evanston providing education and outreach about importance of native tree and shrub planting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolution Environment Board that meets monthly fosters transparency, accountability, and community involvement. In 2017, a fee of \$0.75 per ton of waste transferred through the station would take effect. After 20 years, the fee can be raised to \$100 per ton. Research on similar facilities indicates that hazardous waste, heavy metals, asbestos, and biological contamination including high levels of bacteria, fungal spores, and fecal bacteria can be present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An impact zone was established to distribute funds from the bridge fee to those most impacted by the transfer station. Tonnage fees from the waste transfer station can be used to fund additional air quality around the station. Other businesses and institutions in Evanston may send their waste through the Transfer Station, offloading sanitation and pest business. The testing needed to identify the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRP established strong goals to reduce community-wide vehicle miles traveled (VMT) 50% by 2050 and increase electrification of home and fleet vehicles to 100% by 2035, which would reduce traffic-induced air and noise pollution.

Are we missing anything in our evaluation?
Use the post-it notes to add strengths (green) or gaps (orange) to our equity evaluation.

Are we missing anything in our evaluation?
Use the post-it notes to add strengths (green) or gaps (orange) to our equity evaluation.



TONIGHT'S ACTIVITY

STATION 2



Equity
Community
Collage!

SHOW US WHAT
EQUITY LOOKS
LIKE!

COMMUNITY COLLAGE

Use the materials at the station to show us:

What does *equity* mean in Evanston?

What values, characteristics, or qualities would a more equitable Evanston look like?

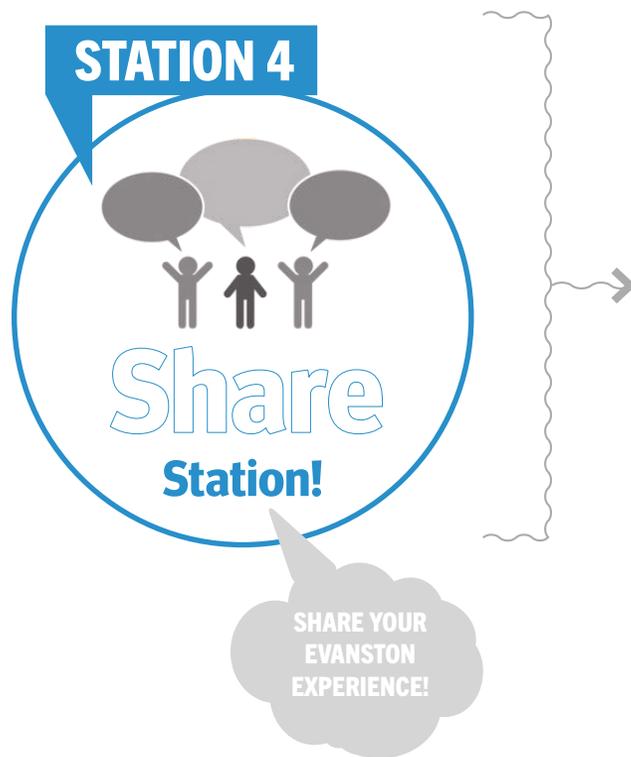
EQUITY

INSERT
VISION
HERE!



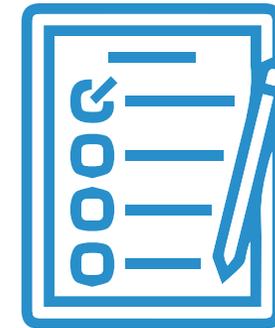
TONIGHT'S ACTIVITY

TWO WAYS TO SHARE YOUR EVANSTON EXPERIENCE!



INTERVIEW

or



QUESTIONNAIRE

NEXT STEPS



Cluster #1
Introduction + Listening
Exploring Environmental Equity



Cluster #2
What We Heard + Learned
Experienced Injustice



Cluster #3
Investigation Findings
Causes of Inequities



Cluster #4
Draft Plan
Actions for Equitable Outcomes

VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

Tuesday, July 22nd

6 - 8 p.m.

Zoom

VIRTUAL WORKSHOP



VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

Tuesday, July 22nd
6 - 8 p.m.

